

From: Paul Nendick
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/11/02 1:37pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hello,

I'm a computer software engineering professional and am concerned by Microsoft's monopoly in my field of business. Their business practices, corporate ethos and products all threaten the Freedom of Speech.

The lynchpin for this is the popular Microsoft Word file format. Word (and other Microsoft Office) files trap each and every thought expressed in them by storing them in a proprietary, binary file format. Only Microsoft products can correctly and consistently decipher these and no other software products can or ever will be able to do this. Microsoft has gone to great lengths to obscure and incorrectly document these file formats. Each word and thought expressed in these formats is a prisoner to Microsoft's future whimsy. Today these file formats cost no money to view, but will they in the future? Can we take this sort of risk?

I have personally investigated these issues as have hundreds of other programmers and we have all come to the same conclusion -- Microsoft Office is and always will be the only software that can use these files. There is a good discussion of this matter found here:

<http://www.newsforge.com/article.pl?sid=02/01/10/1711238&mode=thread>

To illustrate the importance of open standard formats for information exchange in binary formats such as these, one need look no further than the Internet for a shining example. I can use a Macintosh to view a webpage servered on a Sun server written by a Linux user. All this communication occurs flawlessly over a myriad different vendors' hardware. If Microsoft had understood the Internet better in it's formative stages, I'm certain we would not enjoy the remarkable open forum for ideas that the Internet is today.

A possible solution to this matter is to require Microsoft to fully support open, standard file formats for each of it's products. These formats can readily be designed in the same environment that forged the

standards that hold the Internet together (IEEE) or the formats designed by the open source OpenOffice using the open XML specifications could be chosen:
<http://xml.openoffice.org/>

In addition to making Microsoft support such a format(s), I believe it would be beneficial for the Justice department to recommend that the version of file format decided upon be the standard format used by the US government for its electronic document publishing.

If you like me to elaborate on these or any related issues, please contact me at this email address or at my home:

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Sincerely,

Paul Nendick

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